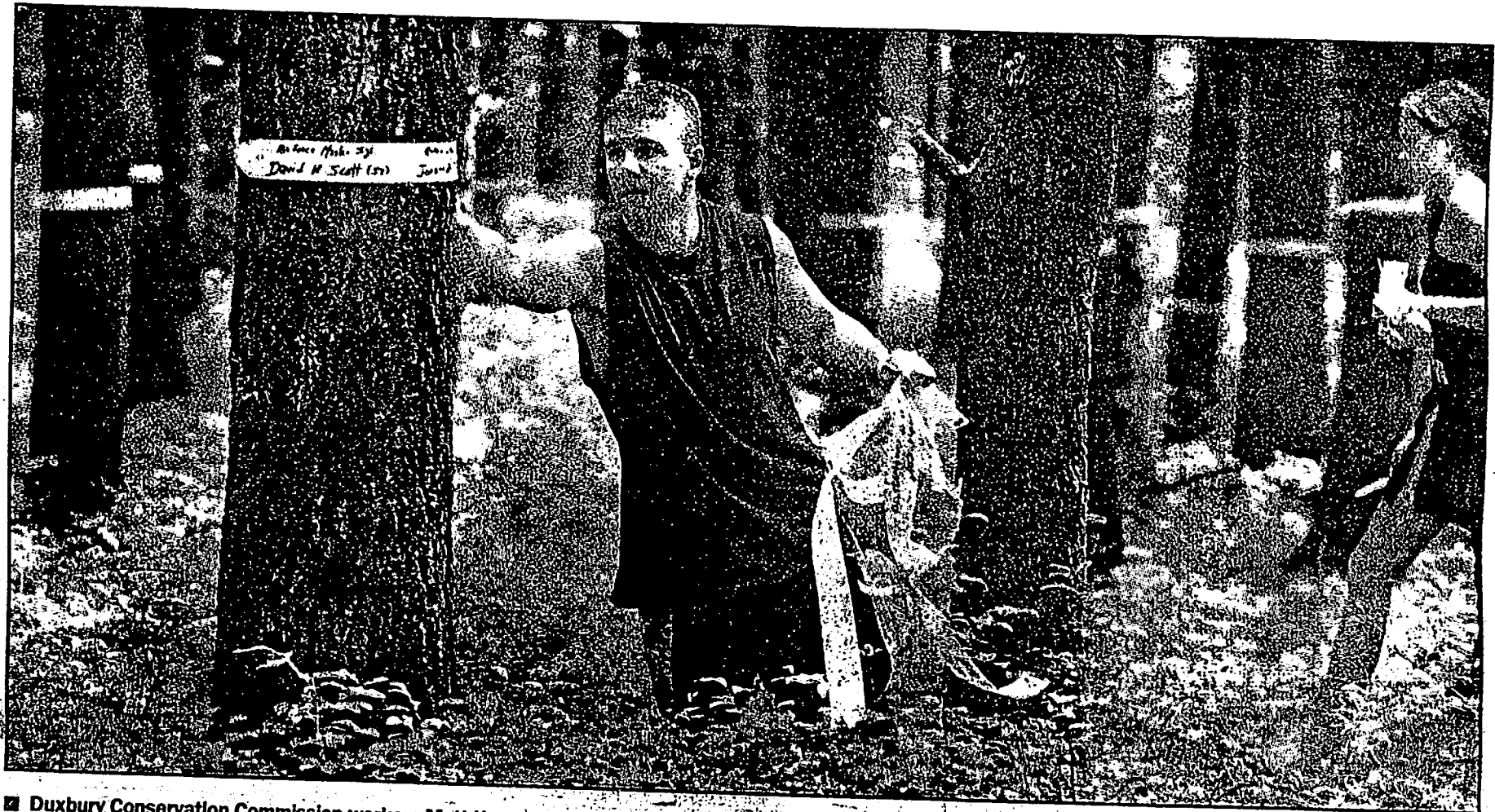


MEMORIAL OR PROTEST?

Iraq victim ribbons pulled from trees



■ Duxbury Conservation Commission workers Matt Homsy and Jenna Moody remove yellow ribbons containing names of those killed in Iraq that were anonymously placed on dozens of trees at Round Pond. They were removed because whoever put them on the town-owned property did not have Duxbury's permission.

GARY HIGGINS/The Patriot Ledger

Duxbury says location is inappropriate

By ANNE TRAFTON
The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY

People walking the Round Pond trails in recent weeks have stumbled upon an unexpected sight: dozens of yellow ribbons, tied around trees, bearing the names of American soldiers killed in Iraq. But the display made a quick exit

yesterday when town officials ordered the ribbons removed because whoever put them up did not have authorization.

"It really makes a political statement that we just can't allow on town property, especially without permission," Selectmen Chairman Andre Martecchini said.

The memorial, which stretched deep into the woods near Round Pond, also

included ribbons in honor of wounded Americans and Iraqi civilians killed in the war.

Martecchini and other town officials say they have no idea who tied the ribbons on the trees at Round Pond, a town-managed conservation area about a quarter mile east of Route 3.

"We'll box it up and keep it at town

Please see RIBBONS — Page 2

YOUR VIEWS

Were the ribbons tribute or protest?
Should the town have left them up?

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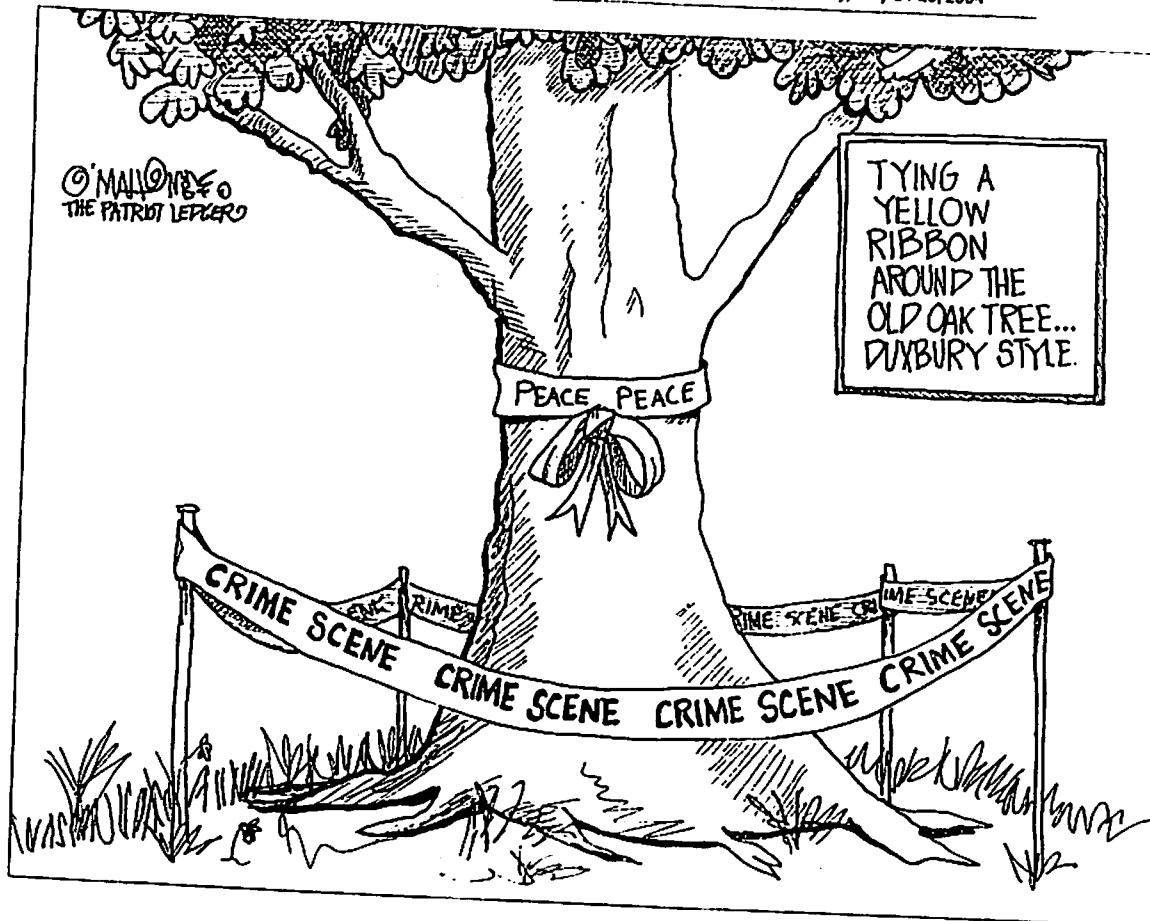
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The Patriot Ledger Saturday/Sunday, July 24-25, 2004



Memorial or protest? Duxbury pulls down Iraq victim ribbons

■ RIBBONS

Continued from Page 1

hall, and if somebody wants to claim it, they can do that," Martecchini said.

Whether the ribbons were meant as a memorial to fallen soldiers or a political statement against the war was unknown. In either case, town-owned land is not the appropriate site, officials say.

"We really don't know what the message is," Martecchini said. "That's not why we're removing it. It could be pro-Iraq, against Iraq. It's just a political statement on town-owned property without authorization."

William Newman, commander of Duxbury's American Legion post, said he appreciates the sentiment apparently expressed by the ribbons but wonders why the memorial was set up in such a remote area.

"I think it was a good gesture, but it was in the wrong place for anybody to really appreciate it," he said. "I think somebody meant well. They went to a lot of trouble, writing out names and putting up ribbon. It's not just something that somebody did overnight."

Newman said he did not get a chance to visit the

memorial and was somewhat saddened to hear of its removal. "It wasn't vandalism," he said. "It was on town property, but what harm was it doing?"

Susan Leigh-Johnson, who lives near the conservation land, was walking her dog near the memorial when conservation workers removed the ribbons yesterday afternoon.

"I really felt hurt, almost, and I thought, 'That's our freedom of expression. (The ribbons) are not hurting anybody,'" she said.

Although Leigh-Johnson agreed that town officials had the right to remove them, she said she wished they gave the person who put up the ribbons more time to come forward and ask for permission.

Leigh-Johnson discovered the memorial about two weeks ago. She said she found it peaceful and reflective.

"I thought it was beautiful," she said. "I don't know what (the memorial creator's) true agenda was, but it appears to be thoughtful and empathetic."

But the ribbons did not have a calming effect on everyone who passed by. Conservation Agent Joseph Grady said he was alerted to their presence four weeks ago when someone called his office to complain about them.

"Some people find it unnerving," Grady said. "It's not an appropriate spot for something like that."

The site, off Mayflower Street, is one of the most popular conservation areas in town, Grady said.

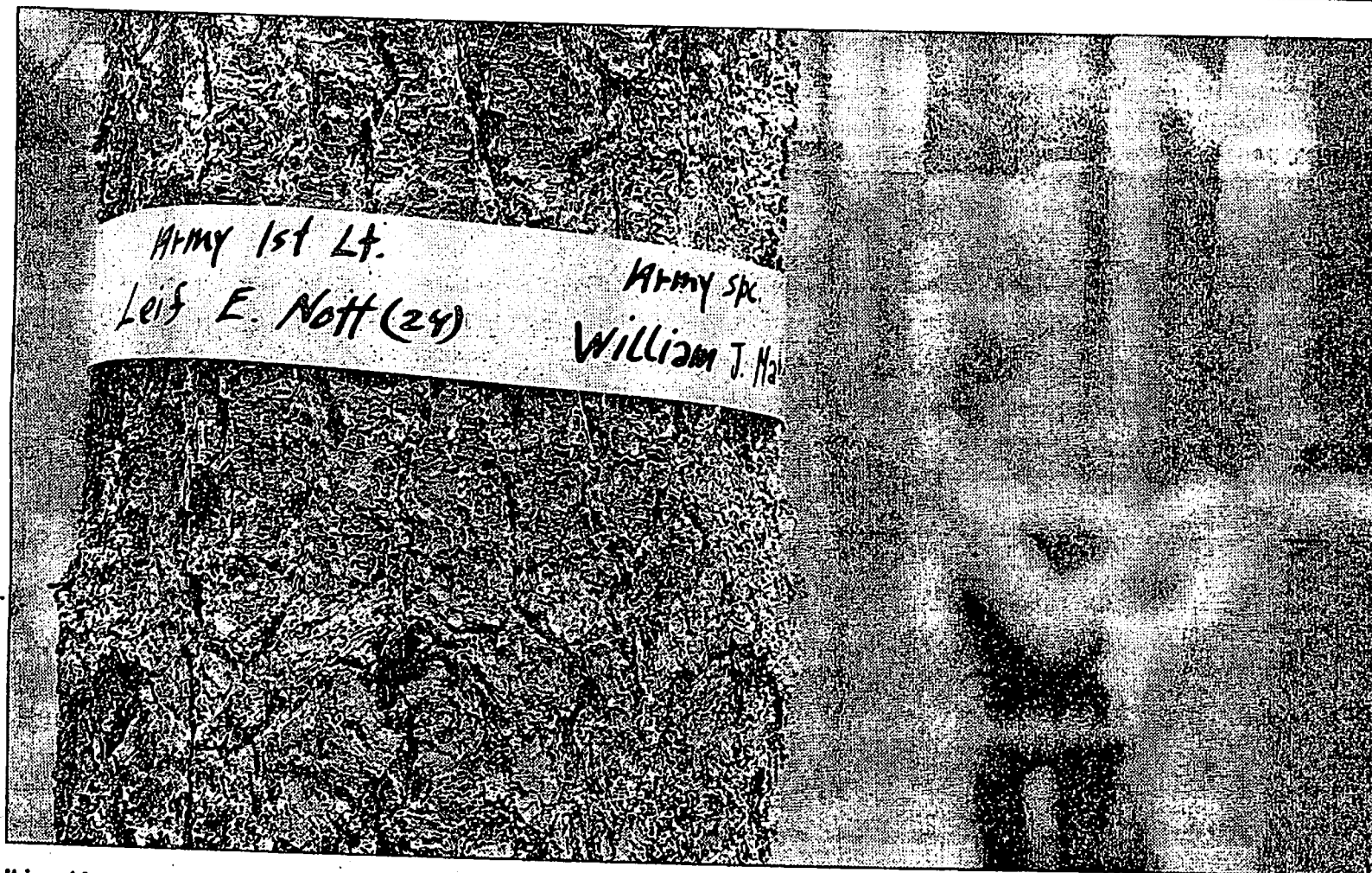
The Duxbury Rural and Historical Society started buying land there more than 100 years ago. Today, the society still owns some land, as does the town, and the entire area is managed by the conservation department, Grady said.

Duxbury regulations dictate that anyone who wants to use the land must get permission beforehand.

"We manage a few thousand acres of land, and we always have difficulty with people believing they can do whatever they want because it's vacant land, but that's not the case," Grady said. "There are rules and regulations, and there are proper channels to go through for these things."

The decision to remove the ribbons follows another action that caused some public debate in Duxbury: the banning of cupcakes at birthday parties at an elementary school as part of a campaign to promote better nutrition.

Anne Trufon may be reached at atrufton@ledger.com.



It is not known whether the ribbons tied to trees in the Round Pond conservation area in Duxbury with the names of victims were meant as a memorial to fallen soldiers or a political statement against the war in Iraq.

GARY HIGGINS/The Patriot Ledger